



News Release

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Utah Kids' Exposure to Secondhand Smoke at All-time Low

UDOH Releases New Findings in 2008 Annual Report

(Salt Lake City) – Since 2001, the percentage of children who were exposed to secondhand smoke inside their homes decreased by 70 percent, to an all time low of 1.8%. That's according to the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Tobacco Prevention and Control Program's (TPCP) 8th annual report.

"One of TPCP's primary goals is to eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke," said Amy Sands, TPCP program manager. "Our new report shows that since 2001, 28,000 fewer children have been exposed to carcinogenic tobacco smoke in their homes, reducing their risk of illnesses like ear infections, respiratory infections and asthma."

The report is released at a time when amendments to the Utah Indoor Clean Air Act will go into effect to further protect the public and employees from breathing secondhand smoke. On January 1, 2009, Utah will join 23 other states, and countries like Ireland, France and Uruguay, in making taverns smoke-free.

"The tobacco industry has made claims that smoke-free restaurants, taverns, and private clubs deter patrons and ultimately lose business," says Sands. "But, the fact is that even countries like Turkey, where smoking is prevalent, are implementing smoke-free legislation to protect the health of workers and the public."

Numerous studies have found that smoke-free policies do not have an adverse economic impact on the hospitality industry, and frequently bring more workers and patrons to smoke-free businesses. Studies have also found that heart attack hospitalizations have fallen in communities following the implementation of smoke-free workplace laws.

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The World Health Organization estimates 200,000 workers die each year due to secondhand smoke exposure in the workplace.

Despite improvements, the fight against tobacco is never-ending. The TPCP Annual Report finds that Utah's economy loses \$618 million each year to smoking-attributable medical and lost productivity costs. The tobacco industry continues to spend nearly \$60 million in Utah alone to market its deadly products. And children from low income households continue to be at higher risk for secondhand smoke exposure, as 9.1 percent of children living in households earning less than \$20,000 a year were exposed to secondhand smoke, compared to 1.8 percent for all households.

In other report results, vehicles continue to be a haven for smoking. While fewer than one in 50 Utah children were breathing smoke-filled air at home, one in seven middle school students and one in six high school students reported breathing secondhand smoke in a car within the previous week.

Utah's smoking rate has fallen 34 percent among youth and 17 percent among adults since the TRUTH campaign began in 1999. In 2007, Utah's youth rate was 7.9 percent, and the age-adjusted adult smoking rate was 11.2 percent. Utah is the only state with an overall smoking rate that is lower than the Healthy People 2010 objective of 12 percent. Preliminary data from January to June 2008 indicate the rate is falling even further – to under 10 percent. For more information or to obtain a copy of the 2008 Annual Report, visit www.tobaccofreeutah.org.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.